



# **GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

## **TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of April 22, 2004**

**3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC**

**Blue Room**

**(County Commissioners' Briefing Room)**

**Old Guilford County Courthouse**

### **TAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair
Robbie Perkins	Greensboro City Council
Keith Holliday	Mayor, City of Greensboro
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Don Vaughan	Greensboro City Council

### **ATTENDANCE**

Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Carrie Reeves	GDOT
Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Karen Croysdale	FHWA
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	Mike Mills	NCDOT, Division 7
Scott Rhine	PART	Robert Gordon	Town of Summerfield

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

### **Action Items**

#### **1. Approve Minutes of February 26, 2004**

Don Vaughan moved for approval of the minutes. Keith Holliday seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

## **2. Approve Annual MPO Self-Certification**

Jeff Sovich advised that each year, the MPO must certify that its planning process complies with federal requirements including the Clean Air Act, the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and others. This certification is distinct from the triennial USDOT certification, which involves on-site evaluation of the MPO's record-keeping methods, public notification procedures, and other details. The recommended action is to certify the MPO's planning process for fiscal year 2004.

Don Vaughan moved for the approval. Keith Holliday seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

## **3. Approve UPWP for FY 2004-2005**

Tyler Meyer advised that the Unified Planning Work Program accounts for planning grant funds which will be received over the next year, from July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005. The UPWP includes accounting of expected costs by various work tasks as well as a summary of the sources and amounts of funding that will be available from each. The funding sources outlined include the regular allocation of planning funds, a summary of the use of the previously unobligated planning balance, STP-DA funds that were approved at the last MPO meetings to supplement planning studies, a range of funds related transit planning tasks, and state planning and research funds.

Among the planning projects anticipated this year is completion of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and several related items including the Collector Streets Plan, a bicycle plan for the MPO area, and continued work on updating the Triad Regional Travel Demand Model. Other planning projects expected during fiscal year 2004-2005 are a range of special studies included in the Priority Needs List that would examine improvement options for the I-40 / Wendover Avenue interchange, land use issues around the US 158 bypass, and impacts on the Battleground Avenue Corridor resulting from the expected removal of existing rail lines. The requested action is to approve the UPWP for FY 04-05, including the updated figures for state planning and research funds, as presented.

Keith Holliday moved to approve the UPWP as presented; Robbie Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to adopt the resolution approving the UPWP.

## **4. Endorse Summerfield Grant Application for Pedestrian Master Plan**

Jeff Sovich advised that the Town of Summerfield has applied for a grant from the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative. The purpose of this grant program is to encourage development of comprehensive local bicycle plans and pedestrian plans. All municipalities in the state are eligible to apply. Local matching funds are required, and the maximum project cost is limited, both based on the municipality's population. This initiative has a total of \$750,000, of which \$350,000 is available during fiscal year 2004.

Summerfield's proposal would develop a town pedestrian master plan, focusing on sidewalks, future trail connections, and other pedestrian amenities. This project will tie in well with several projects either underway, or scheduled to begin soon in the MPO area. The total project cost is estimated at \$20,000, of which the town will provide \$4,000 in matching funds. Summerfield has requested that the MPO provide its endorsement of the application, which is required for approval of the grant. The requested action is to approve the resolution of endorsement as presented.

Bob Landreth moved to approve the resolution as presented; Don Vaughan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the resolution endorsing the Summerfield Pedestrian Master Plan grant application.

### **Business / Potential Action Items**

#### **1. 2006 – 2012 MTIP Update**

Jeff Sovich advised that a new date for the Priority Needs negotiation session with NCDOT has been set. The meeting will be held Tuesday, June 1, in Raleigh. In the interim, MPO staff are working on several studies that will assist in moving some of the priority projects into the TIP for eventual construction funding. Some of these studies have revealed crucial information about the projects. The study of the Horsepen Creek Road grade separation at the Urban Loop has identified the need to widen the bridge structure to accommodate the Horsepen Creek Road Widening Project when complete. The study of the Summit Avenue widening project has revealed that there is not enough traffic at present to justify the full extent of the widening, enabling some of this project's improvements to be incorporated into the US 29 / Eckerson Road interchange project. Staff will provide full briefings on these and other studies at upcoming meetings.

#### **2. 2030 LRTP Update**

Tyler Meyer advised that MPO staff continue to work diligently on the 2030 LRTP. The third round of public workshops has been re-scheduled from early May, to June 3, 7, 10, and 17. This schedule change will all additional preparation time to ensure the success of these workshops. The input received in these workshops will be instrumental in developing the draft final plan for review by the TAC. In the May MPO meetings, additional materials will be available to present, including the draft Thoroughfare Plan, draft Collector Streets Plan, and review of staff findings, including public input received during the second round of public workshops, which largely tended to reinforce input received during round one.

#### **3. Railroad Overpass Replacement Study**

Carrie Reeves advised that the Railroad Bridge Replacement Study has been evaluating the feasibility of replacing four railroad bridges in the City of Greensboro. The bridges under evaluation are located at Aycock Street, Benbow Road, East Market Street, and Tate Street. This study is the beginning of a very long range process that will involve exploring possible state and federal funding sources and opportunities for partnership with the railroad companies. The purposes of the study are to identify needed street and intersection improvements, bring existing bridges up to current standards, increase roadway traffic capacity, enhance pedestrian safety, promote multimodal transportation, accommodate the future high speed rail and commuter rail services, and provide opportunities for improved aesthetics.

These bridges all exhibit numerous deficiencies, including aging superstructures, substandard vertical clearances, inadequate railbed width, and inadequate pedestrian/vehicular corridor width. The recommendations of the study are to construct the bridges to accommodate three lane cross-section roadways (except the Aycock Street bridge, which will require a five lane cross-section), with sidewalks, grass strips, and wide outside lanes to accommodate bicycles. It is recommended that the Aycock Street bridge be constructed with steel girders and concrete retaining walls, while concrete arch construction is recommended for the other three bridges. The benefits provided by these recommendations would include increased

Estimated costs for these bridge replacements are \$11 million for Aycock Street, \$7 million for Benbow Road, \$30 million for East Market Street, and \$10 million for Tate Street. The East Market Street bridge has a significantly higher cost estimate than the other locations because of its close proximity to the East Friendly Avenue bridge. In order to achieve the minimum standard clearance at East Market Street, the East Friendly Avenue bridge would need to be replaced as well. This situation could present an opportunity to make these two bridges the centerpiece of a gateway to Greensboro's central business district from the east. Staff will provide additional information as further progress is made, related to this study.

#### **4. East Guilford Traffic Separation Study**

Craig McKinney advised that NCDOT has completed their study of traffic separation in Eastern Guilford County. One of the recommendations of the study is that the MPO pursue the closure of the Lowdermilk Street grade crossing. The full study recommendations were presented to the Planning Board in February with the expectation that the issue would be forwarded to the City Council the following month. However, the Planning Board had several concerns regarding this proposed closure and requested additional information and an extra public meeting with residents and businesses in the surrounding neighborhood.

Thirty-four residents and 4 business owners attended the public meeting and expressed significant concerns. Many in attendance stated that they could not see a benefit to the closure. The study recommendation was presented to the Planning Board again on Wednesday, April 21, with the provision that the Lowdermilk Street crossing be kept open for now, but reserving the option to initiate the process for closing the crossing at such time as it becomes necessary for safety or operational reasons, or at such time as future crossing improvements in the area, such as the construction of the Franklin Street grade separation, provide safer means of crossing the tracks elsewhere. The Planning Board rejected this modified recommendation. The study will likely be presented to the City Council on June 15, to obtain an endorsement of the study and its findings, along with the modified recommendations for the Lowdermilk Street crossing.

Jim Westmoreland advised that the Lowdermilk Street crossing was the only location in this study that had any significant opposition to the recommendations that were made. The recommendations were modified to preserve the option to pursue closure at a later date because there is not an urgent safety or traffic issue at this location.

#### **5. US 29 Access Management Study**

Carrie Reeves advised that the US 29 Access Management Study has been conducted jointly with NCDOT. The goals of the study were to improve mobility, improve safety, identify solutions that will support adjacent land uses, and promote social and economic well-being. The study objectives were to promote a viable roadway corridor and to address issues of access, connectivity, land use, geometric design, transit service, and right-of-way constraints. The intended outcomes of the study consist of short-term projects to improve safety and require no right-of-way acquisition; intermediate-term projects that may require some right-of-way acquisition, but are warranted for safety reasons; and potential long-term projects and further study needs. Short-term projects could be implemented within 1 to 3 years, intermediate-term projects within 3 to 5 years, long term projects would be implemented beyond 5 years.

The study focused on a 4 mile section of US Highway 29 from Interstate 40 / 85 to Phillips Avenue. This corridor includes 16 cross streets, 14 of which cross at full or partial interchanges, while McConnell Road and Tuscaloosa Street cross at grade separations. The study process involved 2 sets of public meetings. At the first round of meetings a variety of accident and traffic data was presented to the public, along with maps for attendees to identify areas of interest, concerns, and problems. Proposed recommendations, based mainly on issues identified in the first round of meetings, were presented at the second round meetings. The second round of meetings provided an additional opportunity for the public to voice concerns, identify problems, and give feedback on the proposed recommendations. On average, approximately 50 people attended each meeting. The meetings received thorough media coverage by the *Greensboro News & Record* as well as several television stations. Those in attendance were very interested in the project and have made repeated inquiries about its status.

The short-term recommendations of the study include the closure of ramps at Bothwell Street, Eaton Drive, Gatewood Avenue (west side), Headquarters Drive, Lutheran Street (east side), Ryan Street, Spencer Street, Textile Drive, and Woodside Drive (west side). Intermediate-term proposals consist of ramp and intersection improvements at East Market Street, Gatewood Avenue (east side), Hooks Street, East Lee Street, Phillips Avenue, and East Wendover Avenue. These improvements would include sidewalk removal, drainage improvements, landscaping, and guardrail installation. Potential long-term recommendations include consolidating and redesigning the remaining interchanges, and evaluating resulting impacts to right-of-way, environmental conditions, and neighborhood conditions.

Jim Westmoreland advised that 90 to 120 days in advance of actual closures, signage would need to be posted notifying motorists who use these ramps, but who may not live in the area and consequently may not have received notice of the public meetings. These measures would be needed to address issues of motorists' expectations.

## **6. MPO Strategic Reports**

Tyler Meyer advised that there will be an informal public hearing regarding Bridford Parkway extension project, which was a priority project from previous years. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 11 at Guilford Middle School. The environmental document and preliminary design for the project will be presented, providing the public with the opportunity to make comments and learn more about the project.

The surface transportation re-authorization has not yet been approved, but will be entering the conference committee very soon. The House version of the re-authorization bill included earmarks for preliminary engineering for PART's rail line, provided that they can meet FTA's requirements for documentation. This is good news, because if accepted, it would move PART's project along further and faster than it otherwise might be at this time. The House bill also includes federal support for the Greensboro signal system replacement project, which would free up state and local resources for other items.

In response to Mayor Holliday's inquiry during the February 26 TAC meeting, MPO staff have investigated the circumstances surrounding the configuration of the I-40 interchange at Patterson Street. In the environmental document for the I-40 widening project, the adjacent stream and surrounding residential areas were cited as constraints preventing construction of a full interchange at this location. The MPO could initiate additional study of this location, but further progress on constructing a full interchange is unlikely, given the previous findings.

Also in response to Mayor Holliday's request, MPO staff have researched the potential timeline for proceeding with Phase II of the Norwalk Street improvements. The records for this project indicate that the environmental documentation conducted in advance of the Phase I improvements also evaluated the environmental effects of the Phase II improvements. Consequently, design work on Phase II can move forward without need for further environmental work. The estimated construction cost of the Norwalk Street Phase II improvements is \$2 million.

In the February 26 meeting Bob Landreth inquired about the possibility of constructing curbs and gutters on a portion of Burlington Road. MPO staff have investigated this roughly 3,000 foot long segment of Burlington Road and have determined that there is nothing physically preventing curb and gutter installation. Based on the current traffic volume of approximately 4,300 vehicles per day and expected future traffic volumes, widening of the roadway will not be needed for the foreseeable future. Approximately 40 privately owned parcels are situated along one side of this segment, while the other side is fronted by property owned by Guilford County. The only potential issue that might arise regarding the installation of curb and gutter along this roadway segment would be the assessment fees that would be charged to property owners, as required under City of Greensboro ordinances. Consequently, pursuing such a project would be matter of determining its priority; the project could be constructed, but would probably be in the long term.

## **Other Items**

### **1. Board Member Report**

Mike Mills advised that the I-40 widening project is on schedule to be completed by the end of May. Construction on the Western Urban Loop is slightly ahead of schedule. In response to several recent multi-vehicle crashes on I-85, between Rock Creek Dairy Road and NC 61, a study of the design of the roadway design, pavement design, and signage and graphics has been initiated. The results of the study are expected to be available soon.

With regard to the recent inquiries by Steve Gladson of the King's Mill / King's Forest Home Owners' Association, NCDOT has completed a re-examination of the design noise study, which is now under review by FHWA. FHWA will issue its response soon. In addition, NCDOT Division 7 representatives have met with the home owners' association once and will meet at least once more, to answer questions and discuss concerns.

### **2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns**

None.

### **3. Citizen Comments**

None.

#### **4. Regional Transportation News**

Sandy Carmany advised that the study of value pricing options and toll road concepts for I-40 and the PTIA Area connector routes continues. The EPA has issued its decision regarding the latest Early Action Compact milestone submittals. The Triad's submittal has been accepted, which means that the effective date of the 8-hour Ozone non-attainment designation will be deferred to 2007, provided that the Triad continues to meet all milestones.

Scott Rhine advised that PART representatives have met with NCDOT officials regarding the ongoing effort to identify suitable locations for PART's future park-and-ride lot locations. Also, all MPOs have now signed the MOU for enhanced regional cooperation.

#### **5. Wrap-Up**

The next meeting of the TAC is scheduled for Thursday, May 27.

The TAC adjourned at 4:46 p.m.